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Soviet Expels U.S. Diplomat

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MOSCOW, March 14 — The Soviet Union today ordered the expulsion of an American diplomat who it said had been caught meeting with a Soviet citizen to gain intelligence information.

The official press agency Tass reported that the American, Michael Sellers, a second secretary in the political section of the United States Embassy, was detained Monday "in flagrante delicto as he was having a clandestine meeting with a Soviet citizen recruited by U.S. intelligence."

"Another espionage operation by U.S. secret services against the Soviet Union was cut short," Tass said.

The United States Embassy confirmed the expulsion order, but, following its policy in such cases, declined to comment further.

The Tass report said a K.G.B. security agency investigation had

"produced evidence fully implicating the staff member of the U.S. Embassy in intelligence-gathering activities incompatible with his official status."

The action against Mr. Sellers came after the White House announced last Friday that it was ordering the Soviet Union to reduce its United Nations staff by nearly 40 percent. The White House said the step was needed to curtail Soviet spying in the United States.

There was no immediate indication whether Mr. Sellers's ouster might be part of a retaliation.

Mr. Sellers's contact was not identified, and Tass gave no details of their purported meeting.

Mr. Sellers was the first American diplomat expelled since June 1985, when the Russians ousted Paul M. Stombauch, also a second secretary.